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SEVERAL
Circular Letters
TO THE
CLERGY
OF
MARY-LAND,
Subsequent to their late
VISITATION,

To Enforce such
Resolutions as were taken therein.

By THOMAS BRAY, D.D.

L O N D O N,

Printed by William Downing in Bartholomew-Close near West-
Smithfield, 1701.

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A Circular Letter

*To the Clergy of Maryland, enforcing the Duty,
and by an easie Method, accompanied with a suit-
able Provision of Books, facilitating to them the
Fundamental Work of Catechising.*

Reverend Brethren,

I Cannot without the greatest Esteem of, and Affection towards you, reflect upon the good Order of your Conferences, and the Unanimity with which you concurr'd to those Pious Resolutions that were made at your late Visitation: And so happy a beginning gives me good Grounds to hope the best things from you. The truth of it is, when I sit down and consider the several particular Methods of *Ministerial Instruction*, which you did then so chearfully come into, I am not able, upon the most mature Deliberation, to conceive, what can be wanting on your Parts, to render the People committed to your Charge, fully Edify'd in all things necessary to Salvation, but putting the Measures then Resolv'd upon vigorously into Execution, both as to *Catechizing*, *Preaching*, and *Private Exhortation* and *Admonition*.

Now, the first of your Resolutions refers to *Catechizing*, a part of your Ministry so exceedingly necessary in the *Church of Christ*, especially in an Age so loose in its *Principles* as ours is, that enough cannot be said to inculcate that matter upon you. But I forbear here, having so largely spoken to it in my *Visitation Charge*: However, There is one consideration of such peculiar force to yourselves in *Maryland*, that I must needs remind you thereof, to invigorate you in that Work, tho' I know the words themselves were so Emphatical, and the occasion of them must be so fresh in your Mind, that it will not be easie for you to forget them.

And was it so, that but few Months ago, the whole Province were in that *Consternation*, on the account of their *Religion*, as did far exceed our Expectation? And did the *Patriots* of your *Country*, under such difficulties and discouragements, as I forbear to Name, renew its Establishment, and that too with such an *Unanimity* and *general Consent*, as shews it is no indifferent thing to them? And wherefore was it, that notwithstanding all, they would re-establish our Church, and provide for its Clergy amongst them? For this end they declare they did this glorious Work, **THAT THEIR CHILDREN AND POSTERITY BEING PRESERVED IN THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH, FROM FACTION AND SCHISM, IN HONESTY AND CHARITY, MIGHT BECOME GOOD AND SOBER MEN, LOVING VERTUE, HATING VICE, THE RATIONAL CONSEQUENCE OF TRUE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE.** Words surely that deserve to be written (both for the perpetual Honour of the Province, and for a Memorandum

to you of the Clergy, to what purpose you are continued) In LETTERS of GOLD on PILLARS of MARBLE. It evidently appears hence, That the *Christian Education* of their *Youth*, is what those *Patriots* do chiefly expect from you. And surely then, if for this Reason principally, a Clergy have been there re-establish'd, so far as lies in their Power: In this Work therefore it is, That in a more especial manner, you are call'd to exert your Labours, as a most important part of your Ministry among them. And you are to conclude from hence, That you (of all the Clergy in the King's Dominions) have a more than ordinary Call to apply your selves particularly thereunto.

And to me it portends, that you will do something to purpose in this Grand part of your Ministry, that you have divided the *Catechumens* into several *Forms* and *Classes*, lower and higher, agreeable to their Improvements, and their Years respectively. This is the Method of all Schools, in order to have their Scholars attain to Humane Learning; and this would be our Method in training up Youth to a thorough Understanding of the Christian Doctrine, were we half so zealous to have our Disciples become perfect Christians, as the generality are desirous to have them accomplish'd Scholars. In this latter Case Parents can be contented to have their Children learn the Elements of Grammar with incredible torture of Mind, for several Years together, tho' for a long time with very little or no Understanding of those Rules, which, Parrot like, they can run over by rote. And when with repeated Explications their Minds begin to open, so as to apprehend in some measure the Meaning thereof, yet near a third part of Life is spent before any do arrive to a competent measure of real Knowledge. And how studious are Masters and Tutors to excel each other in bringing on the Youth whom they have undertaken to instruct, through several *Forms* and *Classes*, till they shall go out of their Hands with the Character of good Scholars? And why now are not the like Pains taken by Youth, and the like Methods by the Ministers of Religion, to perfect them in the *Knowledge of Jesus Christ, and Him Crucify'd*? a Knowledge so Excellent in it self, that the Great and Learned St. Paul determined not to know any thing else save that, or in comparison with it; for in comparison with that, all besides was but Loss with him, *Phil. 3. 8.*

It is sorely to be feared, that we have much lower Sentiments of these Matters than we ought, or else we should be earnest, to the utmost Degrees of Importunity, with all Parents, to put their Children under such a Discipline as shall be necessary to acquire the Knowledge of these, the most important things. But I beseech you let this be no matter of Complaint against you. First possess your own Minds, and then the Peoples, that nothing in the whole World is of such consequence to them as the Knowledge of Christianity in those its *main*, its *Characteristick*, its *primo-Essential* Principles concerning the Nature, and Offices of *Jesus Christ*, his Redemption of, and Mediation for us; since this we are assured is *Life Eternal*, thus to know the only true God, and *Jesus Christ* whom he hath sent, *Joh. 17. 3.* And since for this the Apostle did not cease to pray for his *Colossians*, *Col. 1. 9, 10.* and that they should be *FILLED with the Knowledge of God's Will in all Wisdom and Spiritual Understanding.* Let them know, that to furnish them with such Knowledge is the very End of your Ministry; That God gave some Apostles, and some Prophets, and some Evangelists, and some Pastors and Teachers, for the perfecting of the Saints, for the Work of the Ministry, for the Edifying of the Body of Christ; till they all come in the Unity of
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THE FAITH, AND OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE SON OF GOD, unto a perfect Man, unto the Measure of the Stature of the Fulness of Christ. That henceforth they be no more Children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of Doctrine, by the slight of Men, and cunning Craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive, Eph. 4. 11, 12, 13, 14. And finally, let them know, that the Way to arrive to a perfect Man, or to a Manly sense of things, and to a full Stature in Christian Knowledge, is to begin with the Principles of Religion, and then leaving the Principles of the Doctrine of Christ, to go on to Perfection, Heb. 6. 1.

And when you have done what lies in you to possess the Peoples Minds with the Necessity of attaining to a full and perfect Understanding of the Way of their Salvation; then be sure, that for your own Parts you spare no Pains with them, and decline not those Methods, which are most proper to instruct them accordingly. Begin as with Scholars, in Teaching, or Hearing them repeat to you the Church Catechism, which contains the *Principles of the Doctrine of Christ*. Proceed next to make them get by heart some Exposition of the same, which is, to *go on towards Perfection* with them. And leave them not to themselves, till their Judgments shall be so ripen'd, as to be able in Words of their own, and not merely in Terms, which they have learnt by Rote from others, to *give a Reason of the Faith that is in them*.

And to this purpose range all the *Children* and *Youth* of your Parishes, just as you would *Scholars*, into several Forms, agreeable to their several Improvements, and difference of Age. And this I do the more insist upon, because I am fully perswaded, that nothing does more obstruct and discourage both *Children*, and *Youth* from yielding themselves up to a thorough Discipline till they become *perfect* in the Knowledge of *Jesus Christ*, than a mixing the elder Youth with the meekest Children in the common ways of Catechising. It *Obstructs* the Childrens Progress, so as to make them think they have attained sufficiently, when they can barely recite by heart the Words of their Catechism, that they see the *grown Youth* of their Parish call'd out to do no more. And on the other side, it *Discourages* the *Youth* from yielding themselves to be Catechized, that they are accompanied with Children, which, as they apprehend, is a Disparagement to them. And both seeing that there is no progressive Motion, no *going on from Strength to Strength*, from one degree of Knowledge to another, are taught to think there is little in it, and utterly to slight *Catechising*.

But I need not insist, for indeed the *Catechetical* part is digested by you, so much to my Satisfaction, that if you shall Marshal all the *Youth* within your respective Cures into those *Three Classes*, as was done by you in your late Visitation, and shall *Catechize* them accordingly, I shall then hope very soon to see the Children and Youth in *America*, as far exceed many amongst us here, as the Children of the poor *Vaudois*, which *Thuanus* speaks of, *Lib. 27.* do those in the Wealthier parts of the Christian World. And the *Religious Education* of *Youth* being a part of your *Duty* of such infinite consequence, as well to the Planting *Christianity* with you, as the *Restoration* of it here now almost expiring amongst us, I conjure you by all that Love which the *Son of God* bore to the *Sons of Men*, when he descended from Heaven to teach and enlighten the ignorant and benighted World, and which Love he particularly expressed to such tender Ones; I conjure you by all this, to *Feed those Lambs*.

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And that there may be no impossibility, incapacity, or any want of Means urg'd in excuse for any ones Omission in that part, I have provided you with such a quantity of Books adapted to those several Degrees of *Catechumens*, as will supply all the poorer Children, at leastwise, in your respective Cures; and will also take care of even those of better Condition, should their Parents be so Barbarous as to deny to provide them with necessary Books, rather than they shall want *Catechetical Instruction*.

For this I have found by Experience, even here at home, where any Expositions which may be thought necessary, are near at hand in comparison, being to be bought at the next Market Town; yet such is the indifference of Mankind to that which is good, that few or none will be at the Pains, no more than the Cost, to send for them. But if bought to their Hands, (and I could wish, that such as are of Ability in each Neighbourhood, or the Richer *Landlords*, in respect of their Tenants, would furnish each Parish with such Catechetical Sets of Books for the Use of the Children and Youth now growing up; for, I say, if such Books were either Bought to their Hands) or lodg'd with the Parish Clerk, of whom they might purchase them at an easie Rate, the Matter will be brought too home to them, for 'em easily to refuse to comply with the Ministers Entreaties to give themselves up to be Catechized. Now, the want of Books would be much more a matter of Excuse for both the Children and Youth in your Parts, where there are neither *Booksellers* nor *Market-Towns*; and to take all manner of Excuse away, and to render so very necessary a Work, as *Catechetical Instruction*, to all the degrees of Easiness, practicable both to the *Catechist*, and the *Catechumens*, the Books themselves are provided both for you, and them, as is now said.

For the *first Class*, you have the *Church Catechism*, with a *Form of Morning and Evening Prayer for Children*: Also, a *Grace before and after Meat*. Together with some select *Scriptures*, declaring to Children and Servants, their Duty to Pastors, Parents, and Masters. And of these I would have you give one to all the Poorer Families, and to Servants Quarters within your respective Cures, where there are Children; and to recommend it to the Wealthier Parents to buy for theirs. And after this, let it be your care to have the Children frequently call'd upon to repeat their *Catechism*, and recite their *Prayers* and *Scriptures*. Let this, I say, be done, either by yourselves, when you shall visit those Families, or by others, whom you shall intrust to call them thus to account in your stead. And as you cannot think of such proper Persons for this purpose, as the Members of the *Religious Society* or superior *Class of Catechumens* within your Parishes, whom you will find very servicable to you in this, and many other good Offices within your Cures: So indeed, this part must be perform'd chiefly by some trusty Deputies, it being equally impossible, either that such small Children should be brought so many Miles to Church to be *Catechiz'd*, or that you should be continually visiting them at their Houses for that purpose, for which more than your whole time would be insufficient in such dilated Cures. And it may suffice, that you do this in Person only, when either a *Baptism*, or the *Visitation of the Sick*, or a *Funeral*, or any other occasion shall draw you out into any quarter of your Parishes. Where a competition between the several Duties of your *Pastoral Office* is such, that your time will be devoured by any one of them, to the Omission of others equally necessary, if you should give your selves up wholly to that, there is a necessity so far to dispense with the *Personal Execution* thereof, as to reserve a share for other parts of your *Function*: And this I know is too much your Case.

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The *Second Class* of *Catechumens* you have judiciously appointed to consist of Children between *Nine* and *Thirteen*; not that you are to tie up your selves so nicely between such *Periods*, that a Child either under the one, or beyond the other, is always to be excluded that Institution which you judge most proper for such as are within that Compass: But because it is to be expected, that as well *Christian Children*, as those of the *Jews*, should by that time be able to give some Account or *Reason of the faith that is in them*. And it is of the greatest use to fix designs to certain *Periods*, which will cause such Expectations, that (generally speaking) things will answer within those terms. And as you have *Resolved*, with respect to this Rank of *Catechumens*, to have them Learn by heart some Exposition with *Scripture Proofs*, so I have accordingly sent you a sufficient number of that Kind.

This Book is divided into four Parts, and subdivided into Fifty Two Lessons, one for every Sunday in the Year; in which are explained the peculiar Terms in Divinity; and in which are given the Elements of Christian Knowledge, both in the general Doctrine, and particular Articles of the Covenant of Grace. And it is in this manner, I think, that your *Catechism* ought to be Expounded to young Children. For first, as to the terms in Divinity, *Theology* as well as all other *Sciences*, has some peculiar Expressions, which till understood, render any Discourse on Subjects of that Nature utterly unintelligible to either Hearers or Readers; and therefore the peculiar acceptations of such words, so often occurring in our Discourses of Religion, must be first Explain'd to the Youth, as we would have them be ever Edify'd from the *Desk*, or from the *Pulpit*. And such *Expositions* ought also to be so contrived, as to give the *Catechumens* a view of the Nature, Terms, and Conditions of their *Covenant with God*, for *Christianity* is no other than such a *Covenant*. And the whole Texture of our *Church Catechism* is, according to the *Analytical* and best *Method*, both a general and particular Instruction in that matter.

The *Third Class* of *Catechumens*, you would have to consist of *Youth* grown up to some Years, and these you are for treating with in a manner something more Manly than the meer Children of *Thirteen*. You would not oblige them to get an *Exposition* by heart, but would recommend to them some proper Book to *Read*; but yet to read so attentively, and with such application of Mind, as to be so much Masters of its Sense, that in Conference and Discourse with you upon those Subjects, they might be able to give you Reason to conclude they understood what they have Read. And indeed, hereby you will both lead them to Exercise their own Judgments, a thing of singular use to them, and will also Treat them in such a manner (tho' it be in effect still but *Catechising*) as none will think themselves above.

And it is more-over very judiciously *Resolved* by you, to advise them more particularly to read such a Book or Books, as shall more fully instruct them in the Nature, Terms, and Conditions of the *Covenant of Grace*. To understand and comprehend which thoroughly, is to know the whole Tenor of *Christianity*, and which, except it be conceived under such a *Scheme*, cannot (in my opinion) be so rightly and clearly apprehended. Besides, these your *Catechetical Conferences* with them are primarily design'd to prepare them with proper Knowledge, that if *Adult*, and not yet *Baptized* (of which there are so many in the *Plantations*) they may be listed to God in *Baptism*; or if they have been already *Baptized*, that they may ratifie their *Baptismal Covenant* with God in the *Lord's Supper*. And therefore some more enlarged Discourse upon the Nature, Terms, and Conditions of their *Covenant with*

God, such as shall farther explain, what through shortness might be left obscure in the former, must, I humbly conceive, be the most proper Book which at first you can recommend to them: And then other Discourses on *Faith*, or a *good Life*, such as you will find in the *Layman's Library*, when that former is fully imbib'd, may with greater advantage be propos'd afterwards. Well, I think it my Duty to furnish here also, such of your Disciples, at least, as cannot provide themselves; and therefore give you Commission to take of Mr. Jones at *Annapolis*, as many of the *Short Discourses upon the Baptismal Covenant*, as you shall want for the poorer Youth, both Children and Servants.

And I order one Volume of the *Catechetick Lectures* at large for the use of your selves, as well as them, in each Class respectively. The *short Discourses* are to be Read by them, and an Account thereof rendered to you: After which, a *Lecture* at large may be Read to them by your selves, as a more full Explanation of that whole matter than the former.

But why? you will say, the *Doctrine* of the *Covenant* so often Repeated? That according to this, through all the Degrees of *Catechumens*, there is no other difference in their Institution, than the very same things Taught, first in a short, and then afterwards with a more enlarg'd and copious Explanation. To which I answer, that truly I shall desire my *Plantation Disciples* may never understand the *Doctrine* of *Christianity* otherwise, than as a *Covenant of Grace*. And then as for their being Instructed in the same things first more generally, and afterwards more express and distinctly. This is like drawing at first the outward lines of a Picture, and filling it up afterwards with all the particular Lineaments and Features. And the like Method will, I hope, make here as compleat a Mind within, as the other an outward Visage. And it will indeed, in my apprehension, improve the Mind in Divine Knowledge, with an exact proportion to the growth of the natural Understanding; to have, as the *Exposition* explain the *Catechism*, so the *short Discourse* on the *Baptismal Covenant*, the *Exposition*, and the *Course of Lectures* explicate both. And I humbly conceive several distinct *Expositions* in a quite different *Scheme*, would rather confound than clear their apprehensions of *Divine Truths*; just as we observe in Schools, the often shifting of Boys from one School to another seldom makes any great Proficiency; whilst in keeping the Child to one, though a worse, he shall make some tolerable advance in Learning. The reason is, every new Method does little more than Erase out of the Mind what was Imprest in the foregoing, but a gradual Progress from one Degree of Knowledge to another, according to any one Series, will create a full and clear apprehension of things. So that, if as I have elsewhere said, you shall your selves deliver to the *Catechumens* an *Exposition* more expatiated and large on the Point on which they have been Reading before, but to the very same purpose, only more copiously explaining the *Doctrine*, this will let yet a clearer Light into their understanding of these *Divine Truths*. And by this way of giving them *Line upon Line*, and *Precept upon Precept*, they will at length arrive to a full comprehension of that which is indeed the whole *Doctrine of Salvation*, the *Covenant of Grace*.

But the greatest difficulty will be to bring the *Youth* to meet you to these Purposes, which is so much their greatest Good, that nothing in the World is of that Consequence to them. And therefore, because that *Youth*, when once they advance towards the State of *Manhood*, will soon outgrow your *Tuition*, it is necessary that you begin with them first.

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And, I beseech you, with all Expedition, to form out of such amongst them in your Parishes respectively, as are grown up to Years of Discretion, a *Class* or *Society* of *Catechumens*, whom I would have you to Instruct, and Direct, according to the Methods which you will find I have laid down at large in the *Preface to my Discourse on the Baptismal Covenant*, the Book they are to Read, Digest, and give you an Account of, to which I refer you. I call these your Young Disciples, indifferently, a *Religious Society*, or a *Class of Catechumens*. But since too many have such groundless Prejudices, (and it is indeed an amazing thing to consider, how far some pitiful Prejudices do, in many Cases, pervert the Minds of many wise and good Men from approving, or countenancing the best Designs) I say, since many are prejudiced against the word *Societies*, add thereto the word *Catechetical*, being the Ancient Term of the *Church of Christ*, to signify the Meetings of these your Disciples, and I know not then how any can except against them; for I am sure no good Man can gain-say, or oppose the *Thing*. For,

FIRST, It is most indispensably your Duty to call Young People together, and to give them proper and suitable Instructions, their Youthful Years being the very Critical time of engaging them firmly to God; for if left to themselves at that Age, it is very great odds, but their natural Propensity to Evil, which is then in the Highth, and the Allurements of bad Company, which are then most Engaging, will first enter them, and afterwards bind them close in the Service of the *Devil*, the *World*, and the *Flesh*. And let any of you, as you are the Ministers of Christ, and will answer it at the dreadful Tribunal, take heed how you let them alone then to themselves to become the Slaves of Satan.

SECONDLY, It is highly expedient, that you should, for their better Conduct, put them under some *prudential Rules*. And I do recommend to you, for that purpose, those which you will find in the *Short View of the Religious Societies in and about London*, herewith sent you, wherein you will see, that those here in *England* have form'd to themselves such Rules as deserve our highest Approbation: And, with some little Alterations, agreeable to the Circumstances of your parts, you may regulate the matter with reference to the *Catechetical Societies* (for such the *Religious Societies* ought all to be, more especially) with you in the *Plantations*.

THIRDLY, I do assert, That every Parochial Minister ought to be often present with them at their Meetings, to Instruct, and to direct them what they are to read; to examine them, in order to know their Improvements, to take care they do not warp toward Error or Schism, and to prevent Seducers from coming amongst them.

The Danger of the two latter, I know is all that those who are the most prejudic'd, have to suggest against such *Societies of Youth*. But whose fault is it, if their Clergy come not near them, tho' it should be so, that they either warp of themselves, or are seduc'd by others of a contrary perswasion?

Nay, why then, with greater Reason, should not every *Parochial Minister* be always present with, and preside at their Religious Conferences? This, My Reverend Brethren, I do conjure you to do; and as I lay my Heart upon no one thing so much, as your forming these *Catechetical Societies* within your respective Cures, as the only means to train up a better Generation, than the wretched one now in being; so having found the extent
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of your Parishes to be vastly too large to have all such Youth meet you at one Place, whether at the Church, or elsewhere, I desire you to quarter out your larger Parishes into as many Districts as you shall find necessary for their convenient Meeting together, and to appoint so many several Days and Places for 'em to meet you (every Sunday in the Afternoon at Church, being always one of your Days and Places;) and this, if you shall do, tho' I have seem'd in the following Catalogue to provide only Books for one, or two *Classes* in each of your Parishes, yet you shall not want the like Number of Books for as many *Catechetical Societies* as you shall be able to raise. And the Good God, to the Terror of Satan, and all his Adherents, succeed you in these your Labours, and Endeavours.

To Second you in which, I have sent you a *Pastoral Letter*, *persuading Youth both to an early Entertainment of Religion; and, in order to that, to put themselves under the Conduct of their respective Ministers.* And as I would have you to give these Letters into the Hands of the most serious Youth in your Parishes; and such as are likeliest to be influenc'd by them, in order to form them into such a *Class* or *Society of Catechumens*; so I beseech you to apply to them to this purpose by these Letters, with all possible Expedition, lest that any one of these poor Souls, for want of your securing him to God betimes, be pre-engaged to the *Powers of Darkness*.

And because I am absolutely of your Opinion, that could you procure some skilful Person in the Country, to teach your *Catechumens* to sing the Psalms Artificially, as set to the most approved Tunes (and Mr. N.—S. and Mr. T.—P. being both skilful in Church-Musick, will soon train up one or two Masters for the purpose) the Entertainments of *Psalmody*, especially according to the *Latter Versions*, would wonderfully invite the Young People both to enter into a *Catechetical Society*, and would charm them into a constant attendance on it: I would therefore have you make it part of your Business at those Meetings of the Youth, to have them first taught to Sing by Note, and then afterwards, I would have you both open, and close up your *Catechetical Conferences* with a Psalm. This is, with St. Paul, *to Catch them by Guile*; and I am sure will be an *innocent and un sinful pious Fraud*. And as for the Psalms themselves, you have a sufficient *Delectus* for your purpose to begin with, at the End of the *Baptismal Covenant*. And I will take care to send you a more compleat Collection afterwards.

And now, when you have gain'd a *Society* of the best dispos'd Youth in your Parishes, when you have brought them to a love and liking of, and to take a sensible delight and pleasure in the *Religious Exercises* with which you entertain them: Nay, and when you have brought them thus to a *willing Dependance* upon you, so as to give themselves up *cheerfully* to your *Instruction* in all things; what a *Blessed Opportunity* is put into your hands of giving them to understand the *Right Use*, the *Reason*, the *Excellency* of all the *Parts* and *Devotions* in their *Common-prayers*, than which I know not any instance of *Ministerial Instruction* of more consequence to the *Glory of God*, more befitting your *Function*, and more wanted at this day amongst the *Common people*.

I say, of such consequence to the *Glory of God*; For why? Of all the parts of *Religion*, as I have elsewhere observ'd, there is none does so immediately and directly point towards God, as *publick Worship*, and in the due performance of which, the *Glory of God* is so much concern'd. This is that

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Homage the *Creature* pays to the *Creator*; and when it is Solemnly and awfully done, God is glorify'd in the Eyes of Men; than which, what can be more reasonable and necessary? And when it is slightly or irreverently paid, God is publickly to the World, and in his own Presence affronted; than which what can be more provoking to his Divine Majesty? And to take care that God is duly and decently Worship'd, is your peculiar Province, and a matter too which does infinitely concern Persons of your *Function*. It is you that preside in *Religious Assemblies*, and the good Conduct of that affair is wholly under you. It is you alone can Reprove there the disorderly and Indevout; and as you will approve your Selves for your Zeal in your great Masters Service, you will by no means endure there any Irregularity and Levity, but will most diligently instruct all your People so to demean themselves both in Body and Mind, as becomes such mean Creatures in the Presence of so great a God.

And yet, what is there wherein the generality of the Common-People do want Instruction more than in this very Case of paying their Worship to him with a due Solemnity, Reverence, and Devotion? It is really enough to disturb the Spirits of any serious Christian, to observe with what indifference, carelessness, unconcernedness, so as to betray the no manner of Devotion in the Heart, the generality do demean themselves in the most Solemn parts of God's Service. But this great Evil, so much the Scandal and Offence of Pious Minds, (and I wish I could not say of the *Reformation*) as it does in a great Measure proceed from Ignorance in the Nature, and Reason of the Offices; so it would soon be Removed, were there but Twenty in each Congregation of the best disposed *Youth*, well Instructed in their *Common-Prayer*, and directed how to make their *Responses* with a Grave, Solemn Tone, proceeding from a Devout and Pious heart. Example does as much influence in this, as in any other Case; and a well regulated Service appears so Venerable and Becoming, that the whole Congregation will insensibly slide into the Immitation of those who render it such. Now, that you should take the opportunity, when you shall have gain'd a *Catechetical Society* of *Youth* to meet you in order to Receive your Spiritual Council and Advice, more particularly to Instruct them well in the Use and Reason of the *Liturgy*, is what I have formerly urged in the Preface to my *Discourse on the Baptismal Covenant*. And that I reiterate the same Advice here, is because I think it a point of the greatest Importance to the Glory of God, and the Service of Men's Souls, that we Worship him aright. And that you may have no obstruction in the Regulation of this Matter, for want of Books, I have sent *Common-prayers* for you to Lend to the poorer *Youth*. And that they may be duly directed in so material a part, I have sent you to Lend also to the *Catechumens* that most Approved *Rationale* on our Service, Dr. Beveridge's *Sermon on the Use and Excellency of the Common-prayer*.

The last Resolution you have taken under this Head of *Catechising*, was, that so soon as you shall have duly prepared some of the *Superior Class* of *Catechumens* for the *Holy Sacrament*, so as not to fail of a sufficient number of *Communicants*, you would thence forwards have *Monthly Sacraments* in your respective Churches. And without doubt, the Minister who shall be able to form out of the *Youth* of his Parish, such a *Society*, as we are now speaking of, need never want Company at a *Monthly*, or more frequent *Sacraments*. When therefore you shall have train'd up a considerable number of the *Youth* of your Parish, to a very good pitch of knowledge in the Nature, Terms, and Conditions, and in whatever else pertains to that *Covenant*, which in that

Ordinance

The first Circular Letter.

Ordinance they are to ratifie and renew with God; and shall withall have Season'd them by your *Religious Discourses* with 'em, and *Pious Directions* given them, with such Vertues and Graces, as must qualifie them to be worthy *Communicants*; immediately upon that, I beseech you to appoint your *Monthly Sacraments*, and to make it your special care to have all the *Catechumens* of the *Superior Class*, constantly, as well as worthily to partake in that *Holy Ordinance*.

Hereby your Youth will be happily pre-engaged in the Service of God. And from them, you will be always sure to have Guests at the Lord's-Table. And if you can instruct and prepare some of the poorer *Negroes* so far, as that they may joyn in *Communion* with you at the *Supper of our Lord*, (as our Brother Mr. C-----ch has so worthily done) methinks the Diversity of Complexions will add a Beauty to the Spiritual Entertainment: And it may rejoyce our very Hearts to behold Minds so enlighten'd, in Bodies so Dark.

Our Blessed Saviour gave it as a Sign of the *Messias's* being come amongst the *Jews*, That the *Poor* had the *Gospel Preached* unto them. And sure our *Americans* may have Reason then to look upon your *Mission* as from God, when they shall behold you Labouring to improve the Minds of the meanest of them with the precious Truths of *Religion*.

The remaining part of your *Visitation Acts* relates to *Preaching*, to *private Application*, and to such Methods of *Discipline*, as are most necessary to be maintained among your selves.

And I shall, at my first Leisure, reflect likewise upon those Parts successively, in the same manner as here. I say, in the same manner as here; for I shall not offer to lay heavy *Burthens* upon you, and not touch them with one of My Fingers, but as with Relation to the Catechizing of all the degrees of Youth, Care shall be taken to furnish you with *Catechisms* and *Expositions* for them; so with reference to the two remaining Parts, I shall industriously endeavour to provide you with such necessary helps, as I can possibly procure, that so there may be no want of means to any of you to Execute the most difficult of all your *Resolutions*, and nothing to urge in Excuse as to the impracticableness of any one of those Particulars, you have so well, so much becoming your Function, *Resolved* upon; For this you may assure your selves, that I am in the Lord Jesus Christ,

Reverend Sirs,

London, March
the 1st. 1700.

Your most Affectionate Brother,

and Faithful Fellow-Labourer,

Thomas Bray.

A COURSE OF CATECHISING

To be Observed in the

PLANTATIONS.

Consisting of Books more particularly fitted for the Use of the Three several Classes of Catechumens there, in order to Season the growing Generation with the Principles of Piety and Virtue: Pursuant to the Resolutions made to that purpose the Second Day of the Visitation in Mary-Land, May the 24th, 1700.

I. For the First Class of Catechumens, consisting of Children under the Age of Nine,

THE Church Catechism: with a Form of Morning and Evening Prayer for Children. And a Grace before and after Meat. Together with some select Scriptures, declaring the Duty of Children, and Servants, to their Pastors, Parents, and Masters. ————— 20

These to be given to so many as will make a Class.

II. For the Second Class of Catechumens,

An Exposition of the Church Catechism, with Scripture Proofs, fitted for the second Class of Catechumens in the Plantations: Divided into four Parts; and subdivided into 52 Lessons, one for every Sunday in the Year; In which are explain'd the peculiar Terms in Divinity; And in which are given the Elements of Christian Knowledge, both in the General Doctrine, and particular Articles of the Covenant of Grace. ————— 20

These to be lent to so many as will make a Class.

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III. For

III. For the Third Class; or the Society of Catechumens, to be fitted for the Blessed Sacrament, either of Baptism, if Adult; or the Lord's-Supper, if formerly Baptiz'd.

Preparative to the Forming, and Engaging of which *Catechetical Society*,

1. *A Pastoral Letter* from a Minister, address'd to the Young Persons of his Parish, shewing them the Necessity and Advantage of an early Religion; in order to perswade the Youth of each Parish in the Plantations to enter into Religious Societies of Catechumens, under the Conduct of their respective Ministers. _____ 20

These to be put into the Hands of the most serious Youth in a Parish, in order to form them into such a Class, or Catechetical Society.

And to which is added, the better to engage them to meet at such *Catechetical Conferences*, as well as to promote to Heavenly a part of *Divine Worship*, as *Psalmody* in it self really is,

2. *A Collection of proper Psalms out of the late Versions, with Festival and Sacramental Hymns*, sufficient to be Sung in Families, Schools, and Churches. And Set to the most approv'd Tunes which are in use. _____ 20

These to be sung both at the beginning and end of the Conference.

And then for the proper Instruction of these Persons,

3. *A Short Discourse on the Doctrine of our Baptismal Covenant*, proper to be read by all Young Persons, in order to their understanding the whole Frame and Tenor of the Christian Religion; and to their being duly prepared for Confirmation; with Devotions preparatory to that Apostolick and Useful Ordinance. _____ 20

4. *A Course of Lectures upon the Church-Catechism*. These to be Read by some one at the *Catechetical Conference*, more fully to Explain the whole Matter before Read, or Discourst upon. _____ 20

5. *Common Prayers*. _____ 20

6. *Dr. Beveridge's Sermon on the Use and Excellency of the Common-Prayer*. 20

These to be Lent to the Youth in the superiour Class of Catechumens, during the time they shall attend upon their Catechetical Conferences, That they may be then througely directed, by the Ministers respectively, in the Use of the Common-Prayer; pursuant to what has been propos'd in that Matter, in the Preface to the Discourse on the Baptismal Covenant, and has been here again urg'd in this Letter.

The End of the First Letter.

A Circular Letter,

To the Clergy of Mary-Land, relating to the great Duty of Preaching, more especially to the supplying the Deficiency thereof, during the prespnt paucity of Ministers, by Lending, or Dispersing of Good Books:

Reverend Brethren,

SEEING that the Affairs which I am here agitating for the Church of Mary-Land, and your selves now Labouring in its Ministry, are likely to retard my Return amongst you for some time, I thought it requisite, to the more effectual Execution of those good Resolutions made by you at my late Visitation, to Depute certain Persons of Experience amongst you, to call you together at the appointed times, to visit Parochially your selves, your Libraries, and your Churches, and to Communicate to you, from time to time, such Instructions as by virtue of my Lord of London's Commission to my self, or from his more particular Commands, I shall see Reason to transmit unto you; and I desire you will pay that Deference and Respect to them, as I might expect to my self, were I Personally amongst you; for this you may take as a certain Rule, that according to the due value you shall modestly and discreetly put upon your own Function, others will esteem it; and if you would have *no one despise you*, you your selves must Revere such of your Order as are in any degree placed over you.

I am first to acquaint you, that the Acts and Proceedings of our late Visitation were well approv'd of by our Right Reverend Diocesan, and other our Superiors here; and being they contain those Rules which are to be the Measures of your future Conduct through all the parts of your Ministry, I have Printed them, and sent each of you a Copy, that you might have always before your Eyes that which you are to put into daily Practice.

I. And as the first Resolutions did refer to Catechizing, so I have not only transmitted, together with the ACTS OF VISITATION, my Circular Letter upon that Subject; but, as well to enable you to put every thing, then resolv'd upon, with respect to the three *Classes of Catechumens*, into Practice, as to enforce, by an earnest Exhortation, your Diligence in that matter, I have sent you a sufficient Number of *Catechisms* and *Expositions* for all those Ranks and Degrees of Children and Youth. And I do here Reiterate my Entreaties to you, that you would exert your Labours in this part of

Instructing the Youth, as that which is not only a prime part of your Ministry, but what you are most likely to find your Accounts from, and your Pains thereby answered with Success.

II. The next Head of Resolutions then taken, related to a *Regular Scheme* of Preaching; and for the more full Direction in this, I would now have transmitted to you my *VISITATION CHARGE* wherein was given a Series of Doctrin, according to which, I think, you will most fully and clearly inform your Auditors in all things necessary to Salvation. But the other Services for your Church, wherein I have been entirely taken up ever since I return'd for *England*, has made it impossible for me as yet, to set in due order to be Printed, what I then deliver'd to you. Besides, it being my fixt Resolution to require nothing from you, without providing you with the means of performing it; I think it not amiss to suspend that part, till such time as I shall send you a further Supply to your Libraries; so that you may be able to find, when you go about to Compose your Sermons, the Judgment of the Learned, in the best Books upon each of those Heads of Instruction which I have recommended to you. And that you may be the more secur'd from any Deficiency of necessary and useful Books, by having in view, where the want may lie of a Tract upon any important Head, all the Libraries themselves shall be Schematiz'd; and such Books as are thought most proper, are design'd every-where to be subjoyn'd to the Subject Matter.

WELL; but tho I am not here to speak to the great Duty of *P R E A C H I N G*, and the Provision I am Labouring to make for the better performance thereof; yet there is something Appurtenant, and Supplemental thereunto, concerning which I shall give you both my Thoughts, and Supplies, namely, The *Disposing* and *Dispersing* of good Books amongst the People. This, indeed, is in all places needful; but especially with you in the Plantations, something of this kind is more peculiarly necessary, where I have found the Cures so vastly wide, (some 30, some 40, some 50, and even the least 20 miles in length) that the far greatest part of the Heads of Families, I am sure, are seldom able to come to Church; and the Poor, who have not Horses, as also the Children and Servants scarcely ever. The Case, I must own it to you, has very much affected me. And to provide for the Defects of publick Instruction, occasion'd by such a Distance, is what, I must tell you, has taken up so much of my Thoughts, and no less of my Labour and Expence, that I am, at this time, almost exhausted thereby both of Spirits and in Purse. However, I am infinitely satisfied with the Work itself; and that you may tender the Design with greater regard to the good it would serve, I will presume to call this of a *Lending Layman's Library*, for the use of such as live most remote from Church, my darling Contrivance.

Take the whole Scheme of my Thoughts upon this matter as follows.

I. In Cures so exceedingly wide, I consider it will be almost equally impossible for a Minister to visit personally all his People, to carry thereby Instruction to them, as 'twould be for every one of his Flock duly to frequent the publick Ordinances, to receive it from him.

A Second Circular Letter.

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II. I do therefore conclude it equally necessary, to have, in each Parish, a Collection of plain practical Books, for the use of the Laity, as larger Libraries for the Service of the Clergy, that the Defects of publick Teaching may be supplied this way.

III. It would be an endless undertaking, and far beyond the compass of what Charities can reasonably be expected, to furnish all particular Persons with such Books.

IV. As this may be sufficiently done in a much cheaper way, viz. by the Ministers *Lending* Books amongst them, so it will, as well, if not better, answer the end, than out-right bestowing of them; it being commonly observ'd, that a Book which is *Lent*, is more speedily read over, and better digested, than Books of their own: More *speedily*, because they know they must return the Book, and upon that shall receive another: And it will be more *carefully* read, and better *digested*, because, in this case, they will expect, upon the Minister's calling in of the Book, to be asked to give some account of what they have read in it.

V. By the help of such a *Layman's Library*, well dispos'd, every Minister may, not only with ease, convey Instruction to every individual Person in his Parish, but that also regularly, in a due Scheme and Method, according as Christianity and all its parts do most naturally cohere together, to the clearing their minds of Confusion in what they understand of Religion.

VI. It is notoriously known, that multitudes of common people are extremely poison'd with very pernicious Errors by the *Antinomian* Books, which are most frequently to be found amongst them. And the Heterodoxes, more especially of *Quakerism*, *Papery* and *Schism*, are very much occasioned by the want of Reading, and of Information in the Nature and Tendency of such Doctrines and Opinions; so that the dispersing some of the best and plainest Tracts, as well of those practical Discourses, which give just Accounts of the Nature, Terms and Conditions of the Covenant of Grace; and those too both upon the general Doctrine, and particular Articles of the same; as the plainest pieces which have been written in Controversial Divinity, will be a singular means in the hands of the Clergy, to reach out on occasion to their People, to keep them right in the way of Salvation, without deviating on either side into the By-paths of *Herese* and *Schism*.

VII. By thus *Lending* of Books, according to the necessities of the People, you will be also brought under a constraint to study, and to know your Charge very thoroughly, according to their several Wants; which Knowledge of your People, I humbly conceive to be of the greatest Consequence to a thorough Discharge of all the parts of the *Pastoral Care*. And for this Reason it is, that I do much insist upon your filling up the *Tabula Parochialium Inquirendorum*, according as I have directed you. It is therefore, that the Physician would know the Habits and Distempers of his Patient, that he may with the greater Skill apply to him proper Physick.

VIII. By

VIII. By thus *Lending out*, and *Calling in* of Books, you of the Clergy, when at any time you shall *visit* your People, will be naturally led into such Enquiries concerning their Spiritual Improvements, and into such a serious Conversation with them, as will most become Persons of your Function to be found in, and will most effectually maintain your Character with them. Thus mutually, and reciprocally will this Design Operate both upon Clergy and Laity, to the greatest good of both. Besides,

IX. A Benefaction of Books thus given, will not *terminate* with the particular Persons on whom they are bestow'd, but will be perpetuated to future Generations, to the better husbanding the Charity of those pious Persons, to whose Love to the Souls of Men, they are owing. And in order to the better preservation of the Books, each of these *Laymen's Libraries* are sent you in a strong *Book-press*, to be kept in the *Vestry Room*, and deposited in Trust with the Minister for the time being, and his *Vestrymen*, who, every Lord's Day, will be able to inform you respectively, where, and with what person of your Parish, either of these Books are most wanting, and will hand them from you to such Persons. But of the Excellent Assistance which may accrue to you, and the Blessed Ends you would serve, by good *Vestries*, more hereafter.

X. By the means of these *Lending Libraries*, for the Use and Instruction of the Laity, the deplorable want of Clergy in the Plantations, will be, in some measure, supply'd; till such time as God, in his Goodness, shall enable those concern'd, to make a competent Provision in the ordinary way, for the *Propagating of the Gospel* in those dry and parch'd Corners of the Earth, by establishing a Maintenance, and sending in Clergy enough into the Plantations, so that their Cures, may, for Extent, be within some reasonable Compass.

Upon the foregoing Considerations, I am fully perswaded, that no Charity can be better suited to the present State of the Colonies abroad, nor with better husbandry laid out for them, than a Provision of good Books, and a *Lending* of them amongst the People in the manner aforesaid; and therefore have, with the utmost Application, and, I bless God, with an answerable Success, Labour'd to provide you of the following *Laymen's Libraries*, to have each of you, one in your Custody, to *Lend*, and distribute amongst the People committed to your Charge; more especially for you to hand out thereby Instruction to those who live at too great a distance from their Churches, to be able constantly to attend the publick Ministration. And may the Good God so bless these means in the hands of every one of you, as thereby to enable you to *turn many to Righteousness*. And to invigorate you in all the wisest Methods, of Instructing and Enlightning the Souls of Men; Let those words of the Prophet be always sounding in your Ears, *They that be wise, or diligent Teachers, shall shine as the brightness of the Firmament; and they that turn many to Righteousness, as the Stars for ever and ever.* And that you may Approve your selves such, shall be the hearty Prayer of

Reverend Sirs,

Your most Assured Friend,

And Affectionate Brother,

Thomas Bray.

London July
1. 1701.

**THE
LAYMAN'S LIBRARY:
BEING**

A Lending Library for the use of the

L A I T Y.

Consisting of a Scheme of Divinity, with suitable Books, First, for a full Instruction in all things necessary to Salvation. Secondly, To restore such as have fallen into Sin and Wickedness, by promoting in them a Reformation of Manners. And, Thirdly, To recover to the Truth, and the Unity of the Church, such as have gone astray into Heresy and Schism. To be kept in the Vestry of each Parish in the Plantations; and to be Lent out, and Call'd in, except a few to be given outright, according to the Discretion of the Minister thereof.

I. FOR Instruction in all things necessary to Salvation.

First, The Holy Scriptures themselves.
Bibles.

Secondly, Preparative Exhortations to awaken persons Consciences, to have regard to Religion, and the Salvation of their own Souls.

Pastoral Letters from a Minister to his Parishoners: Being an earnest Exhortation to them to take care of their Souls, and preparative to render all his future Methods of Instruction more effectual to their Edification.

Thirdly,

**Thirdly. For a general Instruction in the whole Body of
Christian Doctrine.**

- * Catechetical Lectures on the Covenant of Grace : Being a Body of Divi-
nity, proper to be read in Families on the Lord's Day instead of Ser-
mons; more especially in Planters Houses at a great distance from
Church. 2
Guides to a Christian. 10

**Fourthly, For the more particular Instruction in the Conditions
of the Covenant.**

**I. On Justifying and Saving Faith, and the principal Object
thereof, Jesus Christ, and him Crucify'd**

- * Kettlewell's Christian Believer, 8vo. 1
The Nature and Necessity of Saving Faith. 10
The Surpassing Excellency of Christian Knowledge; more especially
of the Knowledge of Jesus Christ in his Nature and Offices. 10

**II. On Evangelical Obedience and Christian Duties, as Exercis'd
both in Holy Living, and Dying.**

1st. In Holy Living.

- * Kettlewell's Measures of Christian Obedience. 1
* Whole Duties of Man. 2
Christian Monitors. 10
Serious Exhortations to Religious Duties both publick and private. 10
Seaman's Monitors, wherein particular Advice is given with Relation
to the Seaman's Behaviour. 1. Before his Voyage. 2. in it. 3. After it. 10

2dly. Holy dying.

- * Dr. Sherlock upon Death. 1
* Death made Comfortable. 1
A Per suasive to a Serious preparation for Death and Judgment, Contain-
ing several Considerations and Directions thereunto. 10

III. On the Nature and Necessity of speedy Repentance.

- Ellis of Consideration and speedy Repentance. 1
Asheton on Death-Bed Repentance. 10

**Fifthly, For Instruction in those means of performing the Con-
ditions of the Covenant, viz. Prayer and the Sa-
craments.**

1st. On Prayer.

- * Bishop Patrick's Discourse of Prayer. 1
Mr. D. Assigny's Divine Art of Prayer. 10

2dly. On The Sacraments.

- Discourse on the Nature, Necessity and Benefit of Sacraments, as
Seals of the Covenant of Grace. 10
Kettlewell's Help and Exhortation to worthy Communicating. 1
Dorrington's Familiar Guide to the Holy Sacrament. 10

II. To Restore such as have fall'n into Sin and Wickedness, by promoting in all Ages and Conditions of Men, a Reformation of Manners.

First, To Influence Magistrates, Parish-Officers and others to promote this Blessed Work.

* A. Bishop's Collection of Articles, Canons and Injunctions, and of Acts of Parliament to be Read in Churches.	1
Accounts of the Society for Reformation of Manners.	5
Short Vindications of those who give Information.	50

Secondly, To Reclaim some more Scandalous and Notorious Sinners.

Earnest Exhortations to a Religious Observation of the Lord's Day.	50
Kind Cautions to prophane Swearers.	50
Diffwafives from the Sin of Drunkenness	50
Rebukes to the Sin of Uncleanness.	50

III. To Recover to the Unity of the Church all such as have gone astray into Heresy and Schism.

First, In General.

St. Cyprian's Discourse of the Unity of the Church.	5
The Faith and Practice of a Church of England Man	5

Secondly, In Particular.

I. Quakers.

* Snake in the Grass.	1
* Defence of the Snake, in Answer to the Switch	1
Serious Calls to the Quakers to return to Christianity.	5
Mr. Keith's Christian Catechism.	5

II. The Papists.

* Benner's Epitome of the Discourses against Popery.	1
Accounts of the Cruelties done to the Protestants on Board the French Gallies, with an Exhortation to Perseverance.	5

III. The Dissenters.

Epitome of the London Cases.	1
Bishop King's Inventions of Men in the Worship of God.	2

Note, Those Books which have an Asterism prefix'd, being Books of a larger Volume than may be consistent with the small Leisure of the generality of People, to read them, here are but few of them, and those to be lent only to persons of better Condition; but the smaller pieces are to be serviceable to the Edification of all indifferently, and therefore there is a larger proportion of them provided.

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First, To Influence Magistrates, Parity-Officers and others to promote this blessed Work.

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Difficulties in the Way of Reformation.
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II. The Jesuits.

* Baxter's Epistle of the Disciples against Popery.
Accounts of the Cruelties done to the Protestants on Board the French Gallies, with an Exhortation to Perseverance.

III. The Dissenters.

Epistle of the London Call.
Bishop King's Invitations of Men in the Worship of God.

Note, These Books which have an Affinity with the former, being Books of a large Volume, may be consistent with the small Nature of the Society of Friends, to read them, but few of them, and those to be read only to perfection. Hence, Condition, but the smaller pieces are to be perusable to the Education of all indifferently, and therefore there is a larger proportion of them provided.